

**Workforce Development Council
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT TASK FORCE**

BACKGROUND

Rationale for Goal

The goal to increase training and educational attainment beyond high school has been established for the following reasons:

- Idaho must grow talent within the state to fuel innovation and economic competitiveness;
- Increased education attainment improves the quality of life for Idahoans and drives a vibrant, diverse economy;
- Idaho's increased education attainment must be responsive to businesses that will employ the workforce of the future;
- It is imperative we commit to efficiently and effectively increase postsecondary degrees and certificates; and
- Changing the projected trend lines to enhance economic development and job creation.

Specific Focus of Task Force

- Identify the training needs of specific industries that require certificate level workforce training beyond high school.
- Understand current barriers and challenges in meeting these industry identified workforce training needs.
- Make recommendations to improve the design of Idaho's education and training delivery system that will be more responsive and flexible in meeting the identified workforce industry needs.

Challenges in Meeting Goal

Significantly increasing degree and certificate attainment of Idahoans beyond high school will not be easy. While Idaho has one of the highest high school graduation rates in the country it has one of the lowest college attendance rates.

Currently, only 30 percent of Idahoans 18 to 64 years old has an associate's degree or more in education attainment. Another 30 percent had "some college but no degree" (Source: 2009 U.S. Census survey).

In projecting the job requirements of the future, Anthony Carnevale with Georgetown University states in a recent study, "Nearly two-thirds of these 46.8 million jobs—some 63 percent—will require workers with at least some college education. About 34 percent will require a Bachelor's degree or better, while 30 percent will require at least some college or a two-year Associate's degree. Only 36 percent of total jobs will require workers with just a high school diploma or less, and those will be clustered toward the low end of the wage scale."

This research has been used by the State Board of Education to divide their 60% goal for 25-34 year olds as follows: 7% certificates of one year or greater; 19% associate degrees; and 34% baccalaureate degrees and above.

This research highlights the increased demand for educational attainment for individuals who will need some sort of postsecondary education, but much less than an advanced degree. In addition to the 26% or 34,400 25-34 year olds in Idaho needing an associate degree or certificate, there are an additional 40% or 88,200 25-34 year olds that need to have some opportunity for targeted job training. Beyond that we have an additional 1.07 million Idahoans who are of working age outside of the 25-34 year old age range who also need additional workforce skills to compete for higher wage jobs.

Potential Issues to be Addressed

Some of the issues that may need to be addressed by the task force to accomplish these goals include:

- More flexible timing for training and education courses – Increase responsiveness to adult learners who may have part-time or full-time jobs or who need to receive training on a shorter schedule than the traditional 16 week college semester approach to make education and training offerings more accessible.
- Make workforce training credit bearing – Develop articulation agreements so industry focused, workforce training currently being provided by community colleges and technical schools may be counted as credit courses that could lead to greater certificate and degree attainment.
- Stackable credentials – Develop more complete career pathways so that credits received through various training and education courses or even academic credit for work experience already obtained can “stack” up to allow individuals to more easily attain a certificate and a degree.
- Establish data benchmarks for certificate – Establish a means or process to have a reliable measure of the number of Idahoans who possess certificates issued by public and private organizations. Establishing a benchmark of current certificate and degree attainment will be important to track progress towards the goal. Because industry certificates and credentials are often issued by private organizations, documenting the number of Idahoans completing such certificates may be challenging.
- Better match of degrees and certificates to workforce demands – Improve processes to help make education and training more responsive to specific industry skill demands and determine what degrees and certificates would be most helpful to encourage meaningful employment in higher wage jobs.
- Delivery methods – A combination of classroom instruction, on the job training, work experience and assignments, internships, labs and online components could improve the accessibility of education to adult learners. This means possibly using more than one method for a single course. There may be infrastructure and/or cultural issues that stand in the way of such methods.

- Awareness – As the Board of Education is targeting 25 to 34 year-olds in their goal, there may need to be an education effort to make that group of adult learners aware of items such as: 1) availability of certificates, 2) cost effectiveness of certificate attainment, 3) industry need for certificate holders, and 4) time needed to complete certificate programs.

Potential Strategies

The State Board of Education has identified the following potential strategies to accomplish the goal:

Strengthen the Pipeline – Secondary Students

- Better prepare students for the rigor and expectations of postsecondary education prior to exiting high school.
- Provide students and parents better access to information and resources regarding postsecondary programs, options and opportunities.
- Increase the likelihood of college completion through Dual Credit and Tech Prep programs.

Transform Remediation – Secondary/Postsecondary Students

- Provide needed alignment through the Common Core State Standards, which are built upon workforce and college-readiness expectations.
- Develop a statewide framework for transformational models of remedial placement and support.
- Develop strategies and goals to improve remediation.

Demystify College – Postsecondary Students

- Implement systemic advising linking education to careers.
- Develop a state-level web portal to provide clear information about pathways to degrees and certificates.
- Develop strong, guaranteed statewide articulation and credit transfer policies to provide postsecondary options for students and families.

Structure for Success – Postsecondary Students

- Develop accelerated certificate and degree packages to reduce time of completion.
- Employ statewide faculty leaders to develop continuous improvement strategies that promote student success.
- Develop options for adult reintegration into postsecondary programs to concentrate on the large number of Idahoans that are near completion.
- Develop community college options for cost effective delivery of postsecondary education in Eastern Idaho.

Reward Progress and Completion – Institutions

- Generate reports from the statewide student longitudinal data system that will drive decision making by identifying progress and needs for improvement.
- Implement performance funding to incentivize completion and attainment.